MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
DEFENSE ANALYSIS

STIMULATING INNOVATION IN NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE
BY UTILIZING SMALL WORKING GROUPS

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Naval Special Warfare has produced successful innovation by using small working groups. Naval Special Warfare deems an innovation successful if it results in a more efficient, less risky, more cost effective method to conduct special operations. The Quantum Leap program is an example of successful innovation in Naval Special Warfare produced by a small working group. How have these small groups been able to produce successful innovations? Michael McCaskey's Theory offers an explanation of how small working groups innovate. His theory is a generally accepted theory on how to produce innovation in the business world by using small working groups. McCaskey identified three variables needed to produce innovation: 1) the small working group must have the support and protection of the leadership, 2) have access to resources, and 3) have autonomy from established structure within an organization. After interviews with senior Naval Special Warfare officers, two additional variables were deemed important. Ownership and the license to fail were added to McCaskey's three variables.

This thesis will test which variables were or were not present during three Naval Special Warfare case studies where small working groups attempted to produce innovation. Two of the case studies successfully produced innovation, but the final case study failed to produce an innovation. This thesis will evaluate the five variables in each case study and attempt to explain why the innovation was a success or a failure.

DoD KEY TECHNOLOGY AREA: Other (Innovation)

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